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PUJARA RETIRES FROM ALL FORMS OF CRICKET

Cheteshwar Pujara, the rock of Indian batting in the longest format for over a decade, on Sunday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket, bringing the curtains down on an exemplary Test career. The 37-year-old made the announcement on social media, having played the last of his 103 Tests in 2023. With 7,195 runs at an average of 43.60, Pujara stands at eighth place in the all-time leading run-getters from India | P11

FIRST FLIGHT-TEST OF HOME-GROWN AIR DEF WEAPON SYSTEM

India's air defence shield poised to get major upgrade to defend against aerial threats

MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

IN a big boost to India's air defence capabilities, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted the maiden flight-test of the Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS), the Ministry of Defence said on Sunday.

IADWS is a multi-layered air defence system comprising the quick reaction surface to air missiles (QRSAM), very short range air defence system (VSHORADS) missiles, and a high-power laser-based directed energy weapon (DEW).

The indigenous air defence system was flight-tested at 1230 hours off the coast of Odisha on Saturday. "During the flight-tests, three different targets including two high-speed fixed-wing unmanned aerial vehicle targets and a multi-copter drone were simultaneously engaged and destroyed completely by the QRSAM, VSHORADS and High Energy Laser weapon system at different ranges and altitudes," the defence ministry said. It added that all the weapon system components, including the missile systems and drone detection and destruction system, command and control mechanism along with communication and radars, performed "flawlessly". The performance of the system was confirmed by the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur.

DRDO conducts maiden flight-tests of Integrated Air Defence Weapon System

The missiles successfully intercepted and neutralised the indigenously developed, SHIKRA aerial targets, manufactured by Anadrone Systems. These targets fly at high speeds of 650 kmph with operational altitude of 9000m and ranges up to 200 km.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh complimented DRDO, the armed forces, and the defence industry for the successful development of IADWS. He said the flight-tests established the country's multi-layered air-defence capability.

The integrated air defence system will undergo more tests before being commissioned.

New India-Japan framework on AI, economic security

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA and Japan are in the process of finalising a new bilateral framework to strengthen cooperation in economic security, with a focus on securing stable supply chains for critical goods coinciding with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Japan on August 29 and 30.

The framework is expected to cover key sectors including semiconductors, essential minerals, communications, clean energy, artificial intelligence (AI), and pharmaceuticals, sources said.

Both sides are also preparing to announce a dedicated AI Cooperation Initiative, aimed at supporting collaboration between startups and tech firms in the emerging artificial intelligence space.

The initiative aims to promote ties between Japanese and Indian firms. "Such cooperation is a win-win and mutually beneficial and can contribute to the growth of the Japanese economy," a source said.

The announcement is set to coincide with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to Japan. Modi may also travel to Sendai to see an experimental bullet train and visit a leading chip-making equipment manufacturer.

Japan is home to major players in the global semiconductor industry, including Kioxia, Renesas Electronics, Sony Semiconductor Solutions, and Toshiba Electronic Devices. These companies are central to advancements in chip-making and related technologies.

Sendai, where Prime Minister Modi is expected to visit, is part of a region that has been increasingly focusing on semiconductor innovation and development, positioning itself as a hub for next-generation tech.

Modi is set to visit Japan on August 29-30 at invitation of Japanese PM Shigeru Ishiba, to participate in the 15th India-Japan Annual Summit

During the visit, the two leaders will review the progress of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership, with discussions also covering key areas such as defence.

EXPRESS READ

SIT starts gathering info on complainant, visits Mandya, TN

Bengaluru: The SIT, probing the Dharmasthala burial case, has started gathering clues on the complainant now named as accused for fraud and fabricating evidence. Officials are now in Mandya and Tamil Nadu to seek details from his family and friends | P4

MoD issues RFI to procure 76 new helicopters for Navy, Coast Guard

New Delhi: The Ministry of Defence on Sunday issued a request for information for the procurement of 76 naval utility helicopters for the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard. While 51 helicopters will be for the Navy, the remaining are for the Coast Guard | P7

Sigandoor, Byndoor, Malpe, Karwar water aerodromes open for bids under UDAN

MARX TEJASWI @ Shivamogga

SIGANDOOR, Byndoor, Malpe, Ganeshgudi and Karwar have been identified as among the proposed water aerodromes available for bidding under the Centre's UDAN regional connectivity scheme to promote tourism, while bids have already been received for seaplane operations in Mangaluru and Kabini.

Sigandoor in Shivamogga district is known for the Goddess Chowdeshwari temple and has backwaters of the Linganamakki Dam, which is ideal for seaplane operations. Byndoor and Malpe in Udupi district are tourist hotspots with their beaches. Ganeshgudi, a town in Uttara Kannada, is known for Supa dam. Uttara Kannada district also boasts of Kali river estuary in Karwar. Kabini reservoir in Mysuru district is situated on the borders of the Nagarahole National Park that is famous for its wildlife tourism. Mangaluru, on the coastline, attracts tourists with diverse interests.

The Linganamakki Dam backwaters near Sigandoor, Shivamogga district | EXPRESS

Under UDAN 5.5, bids have already been received for seaplane operations in Mangaluru and Kabini. Letters of Intent have been issued for seaplane routes connecting these water aerodromes. P5

BJP, JDU may contest equal number of seats in Bihar

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

SEAT-sharing talks between NDA allies for the Bihar assembly election are in the final stages with sources pointing towards BJP and JDU expected to contest an equal number of seats, likely around 100 each.

However, both parties are likely to face a challenge in satisfying smaller allies like Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) and Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustan Awam Morcha (HAM), which are demanding 40 and 20 seats.

A senior LJP (RV) leader said, "We have made it clear to contest not less than 40 seats in the elections." Even if Chirag's LJP (RV) relents, it is not expected to contest less than 30 seats, sources added.

On the other hand, a senior HAM leader said, "My party would not settle for less than 20 seats. We should not be offered fewer seats than what LJP gets. We have four legislators in the state assembly, while the LJP has none."

Bihar JDU president Umesh Kushwaha confirmed seat-sharing talks are underway, and it will be finalised at the appropriate time. "We will let you know when it is finalised," he said. Sources said the seat-sharing negotiations among NDA allies is likely to be finalised either by the end of August or the first week of September.

JDU, sources said, would not contest less than 100 seats in any condition. This means, sources said, that the BJP will also not accept less than 100 seats. The other ally, former union minister and MP Upendra Kushwaha has not opened his cards so far, but would like to contest on a 'respectable' number of seats.

In the 2020 elections, JDU contested 115 seats and won 43, while the BJP fought on 110 and won 74 seats.

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